1: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

211
764
532
417

PLATE 23

Photograph by H. I. Smith, National Museum of Canada

Memorial post with model canoe and figures representing slaves

[p 442 (G)]

2: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

[The Dance of the Tally Posts]

for the dance to start, and X suddenly cries out that he is feeling peculiar. The night selected is usually that of the *nebusam* of some other *kusiut*, and X is at once escorted to his own house from which the uninitiated are expelled. For that night and the two following he remains concealed within, leaving only when necessary and taking care that no uninitiated see him. During the afternoon following the third night of concealment, a large number of *kukusiut* gather in X's home and escort him to the lowest house of the village. He goes around the fire shaking a rattle violently and calling out:

"More! More! Please say exactly what you want and I will do it."

The uninitiated have been told that X has been unable to comprehend the impending call, hence they have no difficulty in realizing that this is a request to his supernatural patron to be more explicit.[a] This appeal is repeated in every house of the village in order from bottom to top. The rite is so important that X often summons *kukusiut* from neighbouring towns and, on the occasion described, the dancer proceeded to *Sinxł* with his escort and there entered every dwelling with the same request that he had made in his own village.

In the evening X returns to his home where presently the *kukusiut* gather from the villages that he visited. The uninitiated from adjacent houses hear whistling so are not surprised when heralds enter to announce that a call has come to X. The ritual is of the regular *łsxtämem* pattern and a song is composed and practised; the theme is of X's ability to visit the land above but the type is that of a shaman's song. The ritual concludes in the usual manner.

The next day, *nusiutälsap*, the customary raised enclosure is erected and a number of *kukusiut* gather wood in the forest. In the evening the carpenters are requested to make a long ladder, the only paraphernalia required. The evening's ritual ends as usual.

[a] The patron for this dance could not be learnt.

2: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

[The Dance of the Tally Posts]

*575 *796 [417] During *qotlim* and *nebusam* days the carpenters gather in X's house where they construct a long ladder. The uprights and rungs are of split cedar, and each of the latter is decorated with a tuft of dyed, and a tuft of undyed cedar-bark; two white eagle-tail feathers are fastened to the top. In the afternoon of *nebusam*, a *kusiut* who is also a chief blackens his face, dons a collar of dyed cedar-bark and sallies forth to invite guests from the adjacent villages. About the same time the smoke-vent in X's house is pushed back and the ladder is erected, projecting a considerable distance above the roof. The uninitiated see it clearly and wonder what it may portend. In the evening the *kukusiut* assemble and the singers beat out X's two songs for the benefit of the guest visitors. Then the uninitiated are called in. They see the lower part of the ladder, and gaze with wonder on X who keeps walking backwards and [292] forwards in his raised enclosure, clad in a dance-apron and a black blanket to which is tied one end of the long rope. Two *kukusiut* assistants hold a section of it as if to anchor him. The dancer carries a rattle which he keeps shaking violently. His two songs are sung and everything is now ready for the main performance. Still shaking his rattle, X climbs the ladder and disappears from sight through the roof, dragging the rope after him. The sound of the rattle grows gradually fainter and fainter, but the cable is steadily drawn up through the opening. It is so realistic that the uninitiated hardly require the explanation given by an eloquent *kusiut* that a strange power has come to X, enabling him to climb up a ladder which lengthens of its own accord until he will ultimately reach the land above. The orator explains how the dancer will be able to straighten the tally posts, and thus have it in his power to govern the life of an individual, though normally it is only the supernatural beings who can do so. In this connection he employs the term [192] *mtletsta*, a word seldom used which has the significance of "A Measuring of the Span of Life."

As at *kusiotem* dances, spies guard the doorway and threaten death to the *kukusiut* unless X return in safety. No